

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(vi) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Report by Councillor R Metcalfe, Portfolio Holder for ‘Our People and Resources’

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 Following the completion of the recovery stage, we will move to commencement of work on Vision 2025, with attention now focusing on a number of key projects.20

 These include:20

1. INTRODUCTION

In my 2020 report, which was done in the very middle of the two major lockdowns in 2020, I put forward a very different report, concentrating on the key recovery activities that the council was undertaking to make sure that we still delivered our priority services, especially to our most vulnerable customers – many of whom have been adversely affected during the pandemic.

For this year's report I want to go a bit further by both updating on our solid steps to recovery, but also by reminding us all of what our Vision 2025 is all about, where we are with it right now and what the next steps are.

2. THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

The steps we have taken over the year to recover services

Our People

Officers and Members alike have risen to the challenges presented over the last year. We have all taken on new roles, either instead of, or alongside our main role.

We have made a lot of changes in the way we work :

- Many staff still work a significant proportion of their time from home with limited working from our sites and controlled and safe working on the front line. All this change has been accommodated whilst maintaining service delivery in very challenging circumstances
- HR has developed lots of additional support to help both our physical and mental health – support open to both Members and officers
- We are midway through an excellent roll out of new IT kit and the technology under the One Council Technology pillar to allow all staff who need it to work on Office 365 from September 2021
- We maintained our 'decision making' governance throughout 2020/21 by using Teams and Zoom meetings, only needing to cancel a minimal number of formal meetings
- The Member Bulletin has proved to be a popular way of sharing important information and keeping everyone up to date
- Staff pulled out all the stops to manage a well-planned and executed election service with not one but three different elections on a single day

Our services

We have seen our key services continue with minimal negative effect on residents and businesses. Some key points to note include:

- All defined critical services remained functional throughout lockdowns
- Excellent communication delivered on our website and social media, helped the community understand what they could and couldn't do and where to get help. Along side social media messaging we have expanded our use of video messaging to keep the messages fresh and interesting

- Significant level of support for the most vulnerable – including those rough sleeping and those suffering from social isolation
- Customer Services have introduced a safe way of working with those in most need of face to face help – whilst managing even more telephone calls than usual
- Revenues and Benefits have supported more customers as people have dealt with the changes caused by fluctuating work and changing Universal Credit amounts
- We are now able to open up a wider (though still restricted) service level at our crematorium, and have started work on the new facility there
- Despite facing some issues with more cars parked in narrow spaces than in the past, our waste collection teams have fulfilled all collections including green waste
- We have introduced footfall counters into the city centre as part of the recovery plans, these monitor how many and where we are seeing increasing visitors and sits alongside our CCTV service which monitors for an ASB
- Our FH&S team has been working under DEFRA guidance to ensure they still cover ‘at risk’ businesses whilst also helping all businesses deal with the rules for covid safety
- Housing has continued to work through the year, collecting rent, repairing void properties and dealing with maintenance issues
- Housing maintenance has commenced a pilot of a new scheduled repairs service
- All public parks and commons, including Hartsholme Country Park, remained open for use throughout lock down period, providing vital opportunities for health and recreation and were extremely busy as a result.
- Street cleaning teams remained working and modified their work to take advantage of reduced footfall, tackling other troublesome issues such as graffiti.
- The allotments service never stopped, and we now have 98% take up of our usable plots
- The bus station, and its public toilets, has remained open and our parking was available across the city, although as expected at a lower level than before the pandemic started
- Since the second lockdown at the beginning of October the DMD team have been leading a corporate team in the administration of the Government’s Covid Business support grant schemes. Over 750 local businesses have been supported to date with grants valuing a total of £18.6 m.
- We have developed strong relationships with partners to enable a swift High Street Recovery and are accessing up to £170k worth of funding to make this easier for businesses and customers alike
- We have appointed a Climate Change Manager to take forward projects identified within the new Let’s address the challenge of Climate Change priority

Vision 2025

Following the successful completion of the three-year strategic plan 'Vision 2020' in late 2019, a new five-year strategic plan 'Vision 2025' was developed and adopted by Executive on 24th February 2020, including the new priority of addressing the challenge of climate change.

The Vision provided the priorities and aspirations for the next five years – and the detail of what needed to be done each year was to be delivered through a specific Annual Delivery Plan, in which individual projects would be agreed by management and Portfolio Holders for each priority.

Clearly 2020 workload was focused on recovery and remobilisation of services and as a result, the roll out of new projects was to a large degree stopped whilst this took place (but see below)

As we moved towards the end of 2020/21, and it became clear that we could start to plan ahead again, focus turned towards restarting the process of delivering our strategic aims. Due to the financial and resource effects of the Covid-19 impact, we are not in a place to completely pick up where we were, so a new plan is in progress with the following key assumptions in order of priority:

1. Remobilisation of critical and then other services – almost completed
2. Agreed savings projects being delivered to maintain our financial sustainability
3. Key legacy projects (those already underway) to be completed
4. Key 'One Council' projects that will kick start new ways of efficient working
5. Vision 2025 and service projects that do not affect the ability of achieving the first four criteria and contribute towards key goals
6. All other projects to be reviewed shortly to assess the delivery timescales within the Annual Delivery Plan

Since this point, we have also started to reflect on the potential impact on our residents' and our city's health as a result of the pandemic. Before members are asked to agree a refreshed Annual Delivery Plan for 2021/22 – I have officers looking at where we currently support the health agenda and whether there are any other areas that we should prioritise for consideration.

However, whilst I say that we have had to dramatically downscale the start of new projects this last year – that doesn't mean to say that we have not made any progression at all. In fact there are a number of areas where we have made great strides forwards:

- The Boultham park restoration (phase1) is almost complete with an expected formal end date and evaluation by the end of June 2021
- We have maintained progress with the Boultham Park lake restoration project, recognising the increasing importance of good quality open spaces not just under covid, but on public health longer term



- Work has now commenced on site to develop the first phase of the Crematorium improvements – starting with the second chapel site, and moving on later to the installation of new cremators and new parking spaces
- We have continued to press ahead with plans for new housing on the Western Growth Corridor and hope to gain first planning permission this summer
- As part of the City Centre Vibrancy programme - working with partners we have made excellent progress in the Sincil bank/Cornhill area with much improved public realm, and further improvements to the market centre itself to come
- The site of a former housing neighbourhood office at Markham House was demolished and redeveloped to provide five new council homes - this was completed in December 2020
- We have continued with the development of the new De Wint Court extra care facility and this is on schedule to complete this year
- We opened a new play area in St Giles to replace the lost facilities from the fire in the local centre
- We have continued to push the Lincoln Lottery and have raised over £100k for local charities through this popular facility
- We have now got 91 businesses signed up to our Corporate Social Responsibility Charter
- We have developed a new Allotment site on Melbourne Road
- Our Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) is a new scheme that offers 15 units of non-secure accommodation. This offers vulnerable people up to two years of accommodation, with support from our assistants to help people turn their lives around
- Planning consent has been secured for a residential scheme on land off Rookery Lane, which will deliver a mix of two, three, and four-bedroom houses, two-bedroom bungalows and 1-bedroom flats which will all be for affordable rent to meet housing needs and has funding from Homes England. A start on site is anticipated shortly

In a major development for the future of the city - the Town Investment Plan was completed at the end of October 2020, which sets out a vision and priorities for the City over the next five years. Developed with local partners including the Member of Parliament for Lincoln, it formed the context for the Town Fund bid submitted to Government at the end of October 2020.

We were pleased to receive a £19m successful award in January this year - this funding will support most of the projects outlined in the Town Investment Plan. Work to develop the successful projects will now commence with full business cases required by next year.

3. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020/21 – Our people & Resources

3.1 Financial Sustainability

The financial landscape for local government presents an unprecedented challenge to the Council. The Covid19 pandemic had an immediate effect in 2020/21 on the Council's budgets as a result of increases in spending to ensure services continued to be provided throughout the difficult period and to respond to consequences of the pandemic, and with plummeting income from sales, fees and charges and commercial activities.

In response to the financial risks it was exposed to, and in advance of any financial support from Government, the Council took early action in 2020/21 to implement a range of measures to reduce some areas of expenditure. These measures were aimed at ensuring the Council was able to continue to deliver its critical services and to ensure its balances remained at an adequate level to provide resilience for future years.

Subsequently, and in response to calls from the sector the Government allocated a total of £4.6bn of general purpose grant funding to support local authorities to cover expenditure related pressures and announced an income compensation scheme to recompense councils for approx. 75p in every £1 of lost sales, fees and charges income. In addition a local tax income guarantee scheme was announced which will see the Government compensate local authorities for 75% of irrecoverable losses in Council Tax and Business Rates. There has been no additional financial support provided to the Housing Revenue Account.

Despite this financial support package announced by the Government, the General Fund would still have been unable to maintain a balanced budget position without having taken the measures implemented early in 2020/21.

Despite immediate impact of the crisis in 2020/21 and the level of Government support provided, the impact of Covid19 will cast a longer-term shadow on the Council's finances.

The measures introduced nationally to combat the virus have had direct and indirect negative impacts on the Council's finances which will need to be managed over future years. The Government has pumped billions of pounds into the economy to support the response phase of the pandemic and to protect jobs and services. In the medium-term the levels of additional borrowing and the budget deficit will need to be managed down at the same time as meeting ongoing needs to invest in recovery to achieve the growth required to repay the deficit. The Government's national strategy to address this challenge is not yet known, nor what it will mean for local government funding more generally. Furthermore, there remains potential longstanding impacts on the Council's local income sources if behaviour, working practices and spending patterns in the city continue to change.

The financial implications are challenging to estimate with certainty, there continues to be a number of unknowns; from how long, and to what extent restrictions will continue; to what measures will remain to combat the spread of the virus; and to what recovery will look like, such as how customers/residents/businesses will behave over time.

The financial challenges created by the impact of Covid19, coming on top of a decade of austerity in local government, cannot be underestimated.

Although there is a significant level of uncertainty about future funding, based on what is currently known, or can be reasonably assumed, the Council will need to make further reductions in the net cost base of the General Fund of £1.75m by 2023/24.

This is a significant target for the Council to achieve, particularly in light of the annual revenue reductions of £9m that have been delivered over the past decade. This level of savings has been achieved by re-investing in more efficient ways of working; adopting a more commercial approach; and prioritising resources for economic development measures, whilst making careful use of reserves to meet funding gaps.

However; it is becoming much more difficult to find additional efficiency savings and some being considered need to be delivered as part of longer-term transformational changes to the organisation, the Council is taking a more prudent approach to commercial ventures; and it cannot deliver the benefits from economic development measures in the short term. The Council is left with little option but to revert to a more traditional cost cutting measures approach in order to deliver the scale of reductions required within the short lead in time, as well as using reserves in the short term. The Council will ultimately have to make some difficult decisions over the next 12

months as it prioritises which services it can afford to continue to deliver. It will also require the use of the Council's earmarked reserves as a short-term response.

Although closing a gap of this size is a huge challenge it is not unprecedented, and the Council should have the confidence that it has a track record of delivering strong financial discipline and that it can rise to the challenge once again.

In this current exceptionally uncertain period and funding position the Council's overriding financial strategy therefore continues to be, to drive down its net cost base to ensure it maintains a sound and sustainable financial position. The key mechanism for carrying out this strategy is through the Towards Financial Sustainability Programme which seeks to bring service costs in line with available funding and, alongside this over the medium term, using the Council's influence and direct investment through its capital programmes to create the right conditions for the City's economy to recover and once again grow.

The Council's successful financial planning to date has enabled the protection of core services for the people of Lincoln, whilst at the same time allowing for significant investment in the City, and its economy, and delivery of the Council's Vision. The Council will continue to adopt this approach, carefully balancing the allocation of resources to Vision 2025, whilst ensuring it maintains a sustainable financial position and delivers the required reductions in its net cost base.

3.2 Revenues Shared Service

Our Revenues and Benefits shared service with North Kesteven District Council continues to perform successfully, - particularly in consideration of the unprecedented nature of the last 15 months since the first Covid-19 lockdown.

As with many other Council services, the impacts of Covid-19 have been significant – in terms of collection and recovery of monies due to the Council, levels of benefit and Council Tax Support claims, requests for data extracts from the Revenues and Benefits ICT system, delivery of Test and Trace Support Payments, Winter Grants Scheme payments, as well as being central to the assessment and delivery of grants and reliefs to qualifying businesses.

Performance:

For the financial year 2020/21, in-year Council Tax collection was 94.78% - which was 1.99% lower than in 2019/20. Due to the financial impacts of Covid-19 on residents' incomes, officers have been allowing deferrals of payments in relevant circumstances, although this means that these deferred monies will still need to be collected – however over an extended period. Therefore, in the current climate, this reduced level of collection is not unexpected. Whilst every effort is being made to collect monies due, in the current climate this is a real challenge – and, with the latest Covid-19 lockdown 'lifting' being part of a longer-term roadmap, as well as removal of certain national 'protections' being lifted – such as the furlough scheme ending after September 2021 – is unlikely to improve to any significant degree in the immediate future.

For the financial year 2020/21 in-year Business Rates collection for Lincoln is up by 0.08%. This collection performance has been somewhat 'skewed' by the new reliefs [available this year](#) in light of the new measures announced as part of the government's Covid-19 response, predominantly the Expanded Retail Discount.

As at the end of the financial year 2020/21, outstanding Revenues customers stood at a total of 1,650. Although this figure had risen in recent months, this is as a direct result of the first and

second Covid-19 national lockdowns ending and house moves increasing resulting in increased enquiries to the Revenues Team. The usual annual billing period during February and March also created significant levels of Council Tax enquiries – largely by telephone and e-mail – limiting resources available to work on outstanding items in the Document Management System. The BID Levy year does not end until 30th June 2021 – an update can be provided after this date.

Fraud:

Our Team continues to deliver initiatives aimed at reducing fraud and error in the system – through new and existing cross-departmental and national data-match exercises, and initiatives through the Lincolnshire Counter Fraud Partnership. A Council Tax Single Person Discount ‘bulk review’ is currently taking place. The team is also part of the national Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Scheme, also the Verify Earnings and Pension Scheme, both of which result in correcting amendments to incomes used in assessment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. Identifying and remedying Business Rates potential ‘avoidance’ also continues to be a key aim for our shared service. The team is also activity involved in the national ‘Friends Against Scams’ scheme.

Welfare:

Both the Welfare Reform Support Team and Welfare Teams within the shared service had extremely high levels of demand in 2020/21, with residents understandably needing support and advice more than ever. 5,806 Lincoln residents were given welfare/benefits advice and 102 money advice referrals were dealt with. Advice provided enabled £19,522 additional benefits entitlement per week, and lump sum awards totalling £311,249. Discretionary Housing Payments of £226,635 were awarded, Council Tax Hardship monies of £678,946 were allocated to 3,893 individual Council Tax accounts, also £244,000 was paid in Test and Trace Support Payments and through the Winter Grant Scheme.

The shared service continues to deliver significant savings across the partnership.

3.3 Procurement

As in previous years the current financial situation has meant that procurement continues to be one of the areas where there is potential to generate savings. However this is with the acknowledgement that this is subject to market forces and therefore is something which we cannot control.

Significant procurement support has been provided within the last year to a number of the key strategic priorities including the Regeneration of De Wint Court Extra Care facility, the Western Growth Corridor scheme, the Grey Friars Regeneration project, as well as a number of the priorities of Vision 2020. In addition to this specific procurement support was given during the first few months of the pandemic as new guidance was issued by the Government in order to help support our contractors.

The Procurement Manager as part of her duties continually reviews whether there are any potential spend areas and/or contracts which could be renegotiated or procured in order to generate savings. At present there are no significant areas to report but when they do arise, these will be reviewed in more detail with the Operational lead.

3.4 Property Services

As a result of the Covid19 pandemic the Facilities Management team, which includes the maintenance of City Hall, have had to make several changes to how we manage the building to ensure COVID-19 secure status. This has included the installation of temporary structures at the reception and customer services desks, to increasing cleaning regimes and ensuring social distancing measures are in place as well as enhanced hygiene arrangements. Moving forward, our use of City Hall and how we better manage that with our changing work patterns will need to be considered as we move closer to a post COVID-19 world. The Facilities Management team also cover the maintenance of the council's corporate assets and this has continued during the lockdowns to ensure we meet our legal responsibilities to ensure our buildings are safe and operational, e.g. replacement of the lift at Lucy Tower Street multi-storey carpark, In addition, through the social value element of the Council's repairs and maintenance contract, support from the Council's contractor through materials and labour was provided to a community project with the Hartsholme Community Trust and Hartsholme Cricket Club.

The Small Business Support Team, based at the Terrace and Greetwell Place, worked from home during the first lockdown, but have remained in the workplace during subsequent lockdowns to support businesses based at the premises. The role of the team has been vital in providing support and advice to small businesses in the city at a time of need. The team has also played a key role in supporting the business grant payments.

The Estates and Surveying team's work has been impacted in relation to the council's diverse range of tenants, with some leases not renewed, rent reductions sought and lease terms being re-negotiated due to the economic impact of Covid19. In addition to team to continue to provide professional and technical advice/support to many of the Council's key projects/developments including, western growth corridor, Greyfriars, housing sites (Rookery Lane, QER), Towns Fund schemes etc.

3.5 Emergency Planning

The Emergency Plan provides a framework for the control and co-ordination of a response to an emergency affecting the council and is usually refreshed annually but wasn't done last year due to the pandemic. It is currently being refreshed.

We have a full out of hours rota for strategic (gold) commanders for emergency planning purposes. This is staffed by the Chief Executive, Directors and Assistant Directors and also over the last 18 months we have established a tactical (silver) commanders rota predominantly made up of Service Managers.

We have been in 'emergency response' mode for much of the last year due to the covid 19 pandemic and officers have been part of the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (the county coordinating group for emergencies) throughout the pandemic, initially on a daily basis, providing representatives to the strategic command group (SCG) and tactical command groups (TCG). These groups coordinated the activity of a variety of 'cells' that delivered operational elements and included

- Community and voluntary coordinating;
- PPE;
- Testing;
- Vaccination rollout;

- Information management;
- Health and social care;
- Enforcement, engagement and Compliance;
- Warning and informing (communications).

The city council has and continues to provide staff to those cells.

SCG and TCG have now slowed down to fortnightly and weekly respectively and we have now moved to the 'recovery' phase of the emergency – ensuring that all of the partners involved in the LRF continue to work together for the purposes of recovering the county from the effects of the pandemic.

Training is currently being arranged for all new members of both gold and silver commands

Staff have continued to be trained on ACT – Action Counters Terrorism as required over the last year, including colleagues from the DWP. ACT is the new name and format for what was previously known as Project Griffin which is a national police initiative to protect our cities and communities from the threat of terrorism by familiarising staff of organisations such as ours on security, counter-terrorism and crime prevention issues. A review of all safeguarding training is underway which will ensure auto-reminders are sent to staff at appropriate intervals, when refresher training is due.

3.6 Business Continuity

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is a framework that assists in the management of risks which might impact the smooth running of our organisation or the delivery of key services. These risks could be from the external environment (e.g. power outages, severe weather etc.) or from within an organisation (e.g. systems failure, loss of key staff etc.) Well organised Business Continuity plans will facilitate the recovery of key business systems within agreed timescales whilst maintaining the council's critical activities and the delivery of vital services to the public.

Business Continuity Management complements and interrelates with other corporate activities, notably risk management and emergency planning.

The council's overarching business continuity plan is reviewed each year, although due to the Covid19 pandemic this was not undertaken during 2020/21 but has been refreshed early in 2021/22. We also have 21 critical service area plans all of which undertake an annual review, led by the service area and supported by the council's Emergency Planning Officer who is from the Joint Emergency Management Service at Lincolnshire County Council. Again, due to the impact of the pandemic these annual reviews have not been undertaken during 2020/21. A full, comprehensive review of the overarching and all service plans will be undertaken later in 2021/22 to fully reflect any changes in how Council services operate e.g. the additional resilience provided by the ability for staff to now work from home more easily.

The linkages between the Council's IT Disaster Recovery Plan and critical service area plans has resulted in this area being raised as an area of significant concern in the Annual Governance Statement. An action plan is however in place to address this with investment in the secondary ICT location at Hamilton House nearing completion, following which a new ITDR plan will be developed and reflected in the critical service area plans.

The council's Business Continuity Co-ordinator is the Chief Finance Officer and regularly meets with the council's Emergency Planning Officer, who sits on relevant internal meetings such as Safety Advisory Group and the Christmas Market Safety Advisory Group to provide necessary support and guidance.

3.7 Risk Management

The Council continues to develop and monitor key risks, those which could affect the Council's ability to achieve its priorities during the year. Elements of Risk Management are outsourced to Lincolnshire County Council's (LCC) Assurance Lincolnshire service in order to provide the level of expertise that we require. The development and monitoring of the Council's strategic, operational and project risk registers however remains a role that is undertaken by the Council through the Corporate Management Team and Directorate Management Teams.

The Strategic Risk Register for 2020/21 was initially formulated by the Corporate Leadership Team in July 2020 and as part of the reporting protocol within the current Risk Management Strategy both the Executive Committee and Performance Scrutiny Committee receive reports on the Strategic Risk Register to consider the status and movement of all strategic risks at that particular point in time. The initial Strategic Risk Register for 2020/21 contained 10 strategic risks, however due to the impact of the pandemic a further 3 risks were escalated. Since then a further three risks have also been included, resulting in 16 current strategic risks.

Each Directorate identifies key risks within their service areas creating a Directorate Risk Register. These registers contain risks that are mainly of an operational nature.

An Internal Audit was undertaken during 2020/21, of the Council's risk management arrangements. The purpose of the audit was to determine how all aspects of the risk management framework were operating. It was concluded that there was substantial assurance that the Council had effective risk management arrangements in place.

3.8 Brexit

During 2020/21 the Council continued to prepare for the potential impacts of the UK's exit from Europe. The internal working group consisting of the City Solicitor, Chief Finance Officer, Procurement Manager, HR & WBL Manager, Communications Manager, Business Manager – Corporate Policy and Internal Audit Manager continued to meet during the year and actively manage the identified risks. The group focussed on assessing the key impacts of Brexit and identifying and actioning the specific mitigations, along with ongoing monitoring of these, these key areas cover:

- Legal and Regulatory considerations
- Workforce implications
- Finance and Funding
- Procurement/Supply Chains
- Civil Contingencies/Business Continuity
- Community Leadership

Work has progressed well and the group will be stood down from early 2021/22 with ongoing monitoring/management be handed over to service areas.

Officers also continue to liaise with Countywide colleagues to look at the wider impacts on the County and provide support and expertise as required.

3.9 Corporate Health & Safety

A comprehensive two year rolling Health & Safety Development Plan is in place and is prioritised according to risk. It is fully resourced and is approved and monitored by Health & Safety Champions Group.

The main focus last year has been to assist and support services during the pandemic, producing risk assessments, safe working practices and the determination of suitable PPE.

In addition, last year a review of the health and safety risk assessment register was commenced with assistance from Business Development which when completed during 2021 will further improve our health and safety management system.

Safety Assurance Team

Steps have been taken to align process in the Repair Service and Investment regarding fire safety infrastructure and asbestos management. The cleansing of all asbestos data is complete and work continues to improve awareness of the risks and resident engagement.

Fire risk assessing of communal areas of low rise blocks is being carried out by in house assessor's. The management of asbestos in these areas is now being assessed annually.

The future Building Safety Bill requirements are being planned for high rise blocks and emergency plans have been created in collaboration with the LRF.

The team have organised and supplied PPE for the whole council, supported planning and implementation of mass testing sites, and helped support teams unable to venture out; to carry out their roles during the pandemic.

3.10 Human Resources (HR)

During 2020 a priority has been to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

HR's direct response to COVID-19, has been a reactive process of continuously updating and amending our guidance as it is released from central government.

The team have focussed heavily on supporting both the mental and physical health and wellbeing of employees.

In addition to promoting our normal support mechanisms e.g. employee assistance programme, a specific 'COVID-19 ways to support your wellbeing' section has been developed on City People.

This offers tips, video links and signposting for managers and staff. It offers support on key aspects which are fundamental to wellbeing. For example, maintaining physical activity,

sustaining good mental health, staying socially connected when socially distanced and tips for working from home.

The staff charter “The Lincoln Way” has been developed and launched to help us set out behaviours and expectations of the way we all work together to realise our strategic priorities. All employees have been asked to reinforce this at every opportunity through recruitment, training, appraisals and one to ones.

A key achievement over the last year is in relation to sickness absence where this has reduced to 8.97 days per FTE (based upon all employees including apprentices) which has been the lowest reported figure for several years. Whilst the pandemic has had a direct impact on the reduction and is indicative of the national picture, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and action plan have also contributed to the reduction.

The team have supported the roll out of new technology to support our new ways of working and cultural shift to new approaches to management and teamwork.

We have been successful in being awarded the ‘Lincolnshire Carers Quality Award – You Care, We Care’ which is a good news story for the Council as we have achieved recognition for the valuable way we support carers as employees, service users and customers.

The HR team continue to review the HR policies to ensure clarity, harmonisation and compliance with legislation. The reviews are incorporated within a timetable to ensure that all policies are checked at least every three years. The Trade Unions have been actively involved in these reviews. As part of each review, training continues to be provided for all staff who have supervisory duties.

The positive relationship with the Unions continues, largely because of the monthly joint HR and Union meeting, where Unions are updated on staffing issues and are given the opportunity to give their opinions and input.

The HR team continue to review and monitor all workforce data in accordance with the equality and diversity action plan.

Mandatory refresher training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace training has been developed for all employees to complete.

3.11 Work Based learning (WBL) - Apprenticeships

WBL has continued to deliver apprenticeships as a supporting provider in partnership alongside main providers First College and LAGAT College over the past 12-18 months. Although the challenges of COVID have made some aspects of this difficult the team have embraced new methods of communication and lesson delivery to support apprentices who were furloughed or working from home primarily. We have been proactive in our support of the learners and are continually developing new ways of working to align with the post-COVID working landscape.

In April 2020 new apprenticeship standards were introduced providing a new approach to the assessment and development of apprentices. These have now been implemented by the WBL team and are being delivered to all learners on programme across Business Administration, Customer Service and Management apprenticeships.

An award ceremony during national apprenticeship week 2020 was held in the prestigious Guildhall for Business Administration, Customer Service, Team Leading and Management apprenticeship achievers in 2019. The Andrew Taylor 'Recognition of Achievement Award' was also presented. The ceremony has been a long standing tradition for the WBL department and is an excellent way to celebrate learner achievements. Due to restrictions on public events a 2021 ceremony was unable to take place, though this is something we will reintroduce once it is appropriate to do so.

We were heavily acknowledged and celebrated in the 2020 School Leavers Award ceremony. The awards celebrate the top employers and training providers for school leavers on apprenticeship programmes. These awards create a ranking of the Top 150 Employers for apprenticeships, the largest ranking of employers that offer the best apprenticeship and school leaver opportunities in the UK. Crucially, these rankings help young people and their influencers make key decisions about their career.

City of Lincoln Council were proudly nominated as finalists in the following six categories:-

- Top Employer – Public Sector
- Top Employer - Medium-sized School Leaver Intake
- Best for Personal Support
- Best Level of Support
- Best Intermediate Apprenticeship
- Best Specialist Training Provider

We were acknowledged as the "Top Employer – Public Sector" and of the 150 Top Employers across all sectors supporting school leavers the City of Lincoln Council were ranked 22nd. It is indeed a huge honour to be recognised for what we all do and how well we support our apprentices. Following this achievement, we celebrated 25 years apprenticeship delivery; a fantastic accolade to mark 25 years of success.

Our ethos remains to 'grow our own' and despite a decline in numbers on programme for the past academic year 100% of apprentices have achieved on time and 95% have moved into education, employment, or training.

3.12 Craft apprenticeship scheme

We currently have three apprenticeships in position at Hamilton House (one electrician, one plumber and one Joiner, a joiner). Recruitment for the academic year 20-21 was unable to take place due to the pandemic. However, HRS will be looking at fully recruiting to full apprentice establishment of seven for the forthcoming academic year, starting in September and currently reviewing the department's craft requirements.

We continue to ensure every effort is made so that the vacancies are seen as widely as possible, with information available on our website, Lincoln College website, social media, and HOME, the tenant's magazine. As a result, we hope to encourage people of all backgrounds to apply for these apprenticeships.

HRS are still committed to taking at least two apprentices annually. The trades are to be determined in consultation with the Housing Repairs Services workforce, who provide the day-to-day supervision.

Housing Repairs continue to work closely with our partners and contractors to provide as much technical and work experience as possible. The apprentices are also going to be getting knowledge of new build on the latest housing schemes.

As well as the long-term apprenticeships, we will also be looking at providing opportunities for short term placements and working with our contacts at Lincoln College who provide students who require work experience.

3.13 Corporate Communications and media relations

Our communications team continues working hard to ensure our reputation is maintained and enhanced wherever possible. The past year's pandemic has presented many challenges to the team but they have risen to these, adapting the way they work and adopting new ways of communicating with our stakeholders.

With its main focus on social media, the team's posts have had a reach of more than 1.5 million since lockdown began, ensuring residents, businesses, students, visitors and everyone else have been kept informed and up-to-date.

Some of the major successes this year include:

- On Facebook, the number of people following the city council has risen by 28 per cent from the beginning of 2020 with more than 7,700 people now following our corporate account.
- Our twitter, we are just about to reach 16,000 followers to our corporate account. A figure which keeps us in the top ten of UK councils with the most number of twitter followers per head of population.
- The organic reach of all posts on our corporate Facebook page since the beginning of 2020 is more than 1.71 million.
- The organic reach of all posts on our corporate Facebook page in the first six months of 2020 was more than triple the reach achieved in the latter six months of 2019.
- The communications team was instrumental in promoting the council's new services created to provide direct support to vulnerable and isolated residents during the pandemic. This included our befriending service and community support helpline, ensuring those most in need were aware of the help available to them.
- The team continued its support for 'business as usual' initiatives such as promoting the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter widely. The Charter now has almost 100 members from across the city who are supported and encouraged to go above and beyond in helping staff and the local community, especially during this difficult time.
- The team was also heavily involved in promoting the help available to support business during the year, with more than £27m awarded in Expanded Retail Discount, which provided 100% discount on rates for certain businesses.

- The team has continued to develop new skills in different areas of media. They have modernised the way council communicates with its residents and stakeholders and have increased the use of video for use in many areas.
- Our videos issued since the start of the pandemic have been watched more than 60,000 times, with a focus on getting tested, encouraging people to stay at home and the reopening of the high street.
- The team's campaign around the 2021 county, city and PCC elections has been picked up by the Electoral Commission as an example of best practise using, as it did, a variety of mediums from radio to print to social media.
- The team has launched a Councillor Bulletin which is issued fortnightly to all city councillors to keep them up-to-date with city council matters

3.14 Civic and International Partnerships

Guildhall:

In March 2020, the Guildhall was featured on Channel 4's 'Britain's Most Historic Towns' series.

The television company spent some considerable time at the Guildhall with the Mayor's Officer, who also featured on the programme.

We are now working closely with Heritage Lincolnshire to develop tourism in the lower part of the City. This will involve forming links between Greyfriars and the Guildhall.

In March 2020 we carried out a Dendrochronology report on a series of timbers in the Guildhall. This provided up to date information about the building and has prompted more work as soon we are able. Timbers were discovered dating back to the 10th century.

We are also involved with the HAZ and Heritage Lincolnshire; working on walking tours for the lower High Street. These tours will be made available to communities within the area.

The project, with the University, regarding the Charters, is still on-going and, only last week, the first set of treated parchments were returned to the Guildhall and put into a display.

Mayoralty:

The Mayor and Civic party successfully attended many events throughout their Mayoral Year, prior to March 2020. Councillor Sue Burke chose 'LEAP' as her charity during her Year of Office. Fundraising events, in the limited time, organised by Civic Office, raised just under £3,000.

Civic Events:

Many events were planned and partly organised for this year, including VE Day celebrations, 50th Anniversary of the twinning with Neustadt an der Weinstrasse, Christmas Lights, RAF Freedom Parades, etc. All were cancelled due to Covid regulations.

International Partnerships:

2020 saw the 50th Anniversary of the twinning between Lincoln and Neustadt an der Weinstrasse, Germany. Plans were already being made to celebrate with reciprocal visits; plus concerts and other celebrations with communities in both Lincoln and Neustadt.

Our twin town in Nanchang, China sent over 22,000 face masks; which were distributed accordingly.

2020:

The Civic Party attended as many events as they could, via zoom; but unfortunately owing to the Covid regulations many engagements/events were cancelled.

3.15 Legal Services

The team has provided extensive, and often urgent, advice to officers interpreting and implementing the new legislation and guidance during the pandemic. Ongoing work includes the planning, governance and contractual side of major development projects such as the Western Growth Corridor and the re-development of the Cornhill area, along with the vital input in commercial property transactions. The conveyancing for the Next Steps Accommodation Programme and buy back project (using right to buy monies) has been essential to bring properties back into council ownership to help to alleviate the housing and homelessness problems in the City. The opportunities which have arisen from government funding, some to assist the recovery of the city from the pandemic, have required governance and contractual support, which includes the Town Deal and the re-generation of the High Street. Funding relating to initiatives to address the challenge of climate change have also been worked on.

The team continues to undertake litigation to carry out the council's enforcement duties in the private housing, housing, public protection and anti-social behaviour services, and has recently been involved in defending two substantial claims against the Council. Strategic support is provided to internal working groups such as for temporary accommodation and housing development as well as county-wide for unauthorised encampments and various committees.

4. KEY PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Sickness has improved greatly throughout the 20/21 year – to put this in context, the figures over the last eight years show that we have reduced back down to under the 2012/13 outturn. This has been achieved through a mixture of improvements in staff welfare management and may also be related to the fact that many staff have had to work from home a great deal in 2020/21. HR are currently looking at any links in this direction.

Note that of this summary figure of 9.1 days lost per FTE (based upon all employees minus apprentices) – 6.45 days are related to longer term sickness

Cumulative sickness trends – CoLC

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2012/13	1.71	3.63	6.46	9.7
2013/14	2.68	5.18	7.69	10.78
2014/15	2.99	6.68	9.93	13.43
2015/16	3.01	5.7	8.6	11.63
]2016/17	2.43	5.1	8.27	11.52
2017/18	3.11	6.34	9.84	13.62
2018/19	2.9	4.83	7.28	10.35
2019/20	2.42	5.07	7.75	10.49
2020/21	1.13	2.83	5.82	9.1

The tables below are taken from the Performance Information Management System (PIMS) and show performance up to the end of Q4 2020/21 for my Portfolio.

Whilst you will see some ‘red’ statuses on here, it must be said that the pandemic has had a strong knock on effect on our ability to maintain performance in some areas.

In Work Based Learning – it has proved very hard to maintain the same number of apprentices whilst many services were working from home, hence the number of active apprentices dropped to 11 over the year – many of those who are progressing with on the job apprenticeships. It also unfortunately meant that 2 of our apprentices who completed their initial year were unable to find a position or further training.

In terms of our revenues team – that was covered in the main body of the report and the outturn has clearly been affected by the pandemic situation. The team will of course work together to clear any backlog, but the effect is expected to continue for the first part of the next year.

However, we have also shown what we can do in times of adversity, and indeed our Communications team has excelled itself in the number and quality of support comms they have put out on our web site and on social media. In addition our accountancy teams are returning slightly better than expected returns, although interest rates are very low at the moment.

I would also like to take a moment to reflect on some feedback on target setting from the Performance Scrutiny Committee which sat on 22nd June. Whilst my colleagues will address the wider comments on targets in their Portfolio’s, I would like to take this opportunity to address those in my own portfolio.

From Q1 we will be including more detail in the commentary of the Communications measures, and I have also asked that the Business rates measure is restored to the way it used to be reported (i.e. as a %) and we will continue to include commentary on the effects of business rates relief.

Whilst I have temporarily agreed to a change to volumetric data for two WBL measures, these are going to be subject to a review later this year. And finally, as requested, where we have reduced targets to meet current circumstances, I will provide an update on why this was considered appropriate.

Our People and resources – quarterly measures as of Q4 2020/21

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	High Or Low	Low Target	High Target	Previous Data Period	Previous Value	Current Quarter	Current Value	Unit	Status
Communications	COM 1	Percentage of media enquiries responded to within four working hours	High is good	70%	85%	Q3 – 20/21	84%	Q4 – 20/21	87%	%	G
Communications	COM 2	Number of proactive communications issued that help maintain or enhance our reputation	High is good	25	40	Q3 – 20/21	41	Q4 – 20/21	47	Number	G
Work Based Learning	WBL 1	Percentage of apprentices completing their qualification on time	High is good	92%	95%	Q3 – 20/21	75.00	Q4 – 20/21	100.00	%	G
Work Based Learning	WBL 2	Number of new starters on the apprenticeship scheme	High is good	18	20	Q3 – 20/21	9	Q4 – 20/21	11	Number	R
Work Based Learning	WBL 3	Percentage of apprentices moving into Education, Employment or Training	High is good	92%	95%	Q3 – 20/21	100.00	Q4 – 20/21	75.00	%	R
Accountancy	ACC 1	Average return on investment portfolio	High is good	0.12%	0.18%	Q3 – 20/21	0.09	Q4 – 20/21	0.20	%	G
Accountancy	ACC 2	Average interest rate on external borrowing	Low is good	4.75%	3.75%	Q3 – 20/21	3.64	Q4 – 20/21	3.25	%	G
Revenues Administration	REV 1	Council Tax - in year collection rate for Lincoln	High is good	96.75%	97%	Q3 – 20/21	76.20	Q4 – 20/21	94.78	%	R
Revenues Administration	REV 2	Business Rates - in year collection rate for Lincoln	High is good	98.6%	99%	Q3 – 20/21	90.42	Q4 – 20/21	98.97	%	A
Revenues Administration	REV 3	Number of outstanding customer changes in the Revenues team	Low is good	450	300	Q3 – 20/21	963	Q4 – 20/21	1,650	Number	R

Our people and resources – annual measures

Service Area	Measure ID	Measure	High Or Low	Low Target	High Target	Previous Data Period	Previous Value	Current Year	Current Value	Unit	Status
CX	DCT 1	Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days	High is good	95%	97%	Q4 19/20	96.22	Q4 20/21	98.92	%	G
	DCT 2	Percentage of invoices that have a Purchase Order completed	High is good	40%	50%	Q4 19/20	45.6	Q4 20/21	45.4	%	A

For all measures the key is: Green = At or above target; Blue = Acceptable performance – results are within target boundaries; Red = Below target

5. FUTURE CHALLENGES

Following the completion of the recovery stage, we will move to commencement of work on Vision 2025, with attention now focusing on a number of key projects.

These include:

- Continuing to lead on the Western Growth Corridor site to unlock 3,200 homes and 20ha of commercial employment land.
- Completing the site works to De Wint Court which will see it transformed into an Extra Care Facility.
- Building on the successes of the first phase of the Sincil Bank Regeneration Scheme, to achieve long-term, physical transformation in this part of the city
- We will progress work on the Boultham Lake restoration, building in additional elements from extra funding received
- We will complete the work on enhancing our crematorium, bringing the internal workings up to date and providing a second chapel – followed by new parking spaces
- Work will commence on developing business cases for those projects we will undertake under the Towns Deal umbrella – these may include some of the following which were proposed in the initial Town Deal funding bid:
 - Restoration and repurposing the Grade II listed Central Market Building to create a modern market offer, combining retail, food, leisure, and technology.
 - Feasibility work for the redevelopment of Tentercroft Street, to create new workspace and city living.
 - The development of a centrally located food supermarket, providing low cost locally supplied surplus food alongside a programme of advice, training, volunteering, and work placements opportunities.
 - Restoration of the Greyfriars building for use by the public as a heritage attraction with a mix of a digital interpretation offer, temporary exhibitions, events, conferencing, and educational activities
 - Traffic improvements at Sincil Bank including a resident only parking scheme, a 20mph vehicle zone, improved place-setting, creation of a green corridor and environmental improvements.

Finally, I am sure you will be as pleased as I am to hear that we now have a conclusion of the negotiations with the County Council regarding the Usher Art Gallery. A satisfactory compromise has been reached that ensures:

- The Usher Gallery remains as an art gallery on all floors and will be open to the public on average 5 days a week throughout the year to mirror The Collection museum opening times and hence build the links between the two adjacent sites
- Some flexibility has been included to enable the county council to privately hire out the venue on the remaining two days -for events and functions in keeping with the building being used as an art gallery, such as private tours, weddings, evening functions, school trips etc. This will provide a small income stream to the county council and mirrors what galleries across the country are diversifying into.

- LCC and COLC will jointly explore external funding bids to invest in transforming The Collection Museum and Usher gallery and in doing so create a sense of one location across two sites

The Collection Management Agreement:

- A new Collections management agreement will be signed with the county council to keep our material (both art and archaeology) in the city. This will be a long-term agreement of 39 years duration to mirror the lease for the Usher Gallery
- A % of the Usher collection to remain on display in the Usher Gallery and will be rotated more frequently with material in storage to create dynamic displays

Management going forward:

- Quarterly management meetings between LCC and COLC will take place to maintain close working arrangements and oversee the agreements. These to be at an operational officer level

The final legal agreements underpinning the above principles are currently being worked on and will be signed in due course

I would like to express my appreciation to the really excellent range of officers who support me with the work of the Portfolio and to specifically say thank you to the following officers for their assistance in the preparation of this report:

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Councillor Ric Metcalfe (Leader of the Council)
Portfolio Holder for People and Resources